DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 030 344 FL 001 355

The Use of Scheduled Television, Videotapes, and Films for Foreign Language Instruction.
Massachusetts Foreign Language Association.; Massachusetts Univ., Amherst. Dept. of Romance Languages.
Pub Date Nov 68
Note-5p.
Journal Cit-Bay State Foreign Language Bulletin; v14 n1 p11-15 November 1968
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.35
Descriptors-*Cultural Context, Educational Television, Equipment Evaluation, Evaluation Criteria, Instructional Aids, *Instructional Films, Instructional Media, Instructional Television, *Language Instruction, Modern Languages, Program Effectiveness, *Program Evaluation, Program Improvement, Student Evaluation, Teaching Techniques, *Televised Instruction, Video Tape Recordings

Analyzed in this paper are the strengths and limitations of scheduled television, films, and videotapes in foreign language instructional programs developed in a cultural context. Pedagogical assumptions to be used as evaluation criteria are outlined under such headings as optimum learning and teaching requirements, effective teaching materials, suitable equipment, and testing and evaluation. Considerations of the functions that these scheduled educational media can and cannot provide precede a final statement of the conclusions drawn from the foregoing discussion. (AF)

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From: Bay State Foreign Language Bulletin

Vol. XIV, No. 1 UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS November, 1968
Amherst, Mass.

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Published by the Department of Romance Languages in Cooperation with the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association, a Constituent of the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages and the FL Program of MLA.

THE USE OF SCHEDULED TELEVISION, VIDEOTAPES, AND FILMS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The present decade has witnessed considerable experimentation by schools and colleges in the use of newer media for foreign language instruction. Conventional ETV broadcasting has been augmented by regional airborne transmission and by closed circuit systems using both fixed station and coaxial cable for local use. In one state, all public schools are connected by cable to a source of state-wide programming. Several other states, including Massachusetts, have either established or are in the process of establishing state-wide networks for educational television so that all their schools may receive a high quality picture as well as sound and benefit from improved programming.

The development of videotape cameras and recorders at a price within the reach of many school systems has created both an alternative to television and a means of complementing the medium.

Films, of course, have been available for many years to teachers of foreign languages, but few could be considered of high quality and appropriate for courses in the elementary and secondary schools. In the last few years, however, as numerous audio-lingual programs have become reasonably well established and as teachers have recognized the desirability, if not the necessity, for teaching language in a cultural context, there has been a more lively

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interest in FL films of three types:

1. whole instructional courses presented on films

2. films which serve as major integral components of packages of materials

3. supplementary films which provide additional experience in and knowledge about the foreign culture, and practice in language skills.

Some productions of high quality and in color are now available in all three categories.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the possibilities and limitations of scheduled television and films in programs of instruction in foreign languages and cultures.

It is intended that this analysis and the conclusions drawn will have broad application as to media, content, age of learners, and levels of learning. "Scheduled television" is used to designate either broadcast or closed circuit television programs, live or recorded, as long as they are scheduled for one-way transmission without provision for direct feedback to a live instructor or intercommunication between student and TV instructor. This statement also covers the use of films and locally played videotapes, whether pre-recorded or recorded off the air locally.

I. Pedagogical Assumptions

Since we assume that the foreign language program will be solidly based on the findings of linguistics and the psychology of learning, we restate a series of pedagogical assumptions to serve as criteria in evaluating the use of various media in foreign language instruction.

A. Optimum learning requires, among other things:

1. Recognition and imitation of models of the foreign language spoken in authentic cultural situations.

2. Frequent, regular practice of these model utterances, with learning to the point of habitual control of the foreign language.

3. Linguistic and situational variation of the models to the point of liberated expression.

4. A systematic transition from the listening-speaking to the reading and writing skills.

5. Sensitive awareness of all aspects of the cultural patterns of the people.

6. Systematic development of vacabulary.

B. Optimum teaching requires:

1. Multiple presentations of authentic cultural situations and productive, meaningful patterns of speech for imitation and internalization.

2. Extensive structure drills, designed to foster the student's powers of analogy and cognition.

3. Immediate confirmation or correction of individual student responses.

4. Provision for gradual reduction of teacher control in the student's use of patterns and vocabulary until the point of personalization and free, creative use is attained.

5. Provision for gradual transition from the audio-lingual to the graphic skills and for progression toward liberated reading and writing.

C. Effective teaching materials, therefore, must provide:

1. A genuine cultural context for authentic speech patterns (since language is only one aspect of total culture) which can be imitated and minipulated.

   The short dialog is one excellent means for the presentation of models since it emphasizes the fact that communication involves two or more people, and it can incorporate appropriate grammatical structures. Each (model) sentence should contain one or more structures which constantly reoccur in the language.

2. Exercises by means of which the structures can be practiced and thoroughly learned. These should emphasize necessary form and order changes and should be sufficient in quantity so that the student can be led to the free use of these structures in different situations while staying within the limits of his linguistic competence.

3. Appropriate visuals which help communicate meaning, stimulate cultural awareness, and promote the acquisition of language skills.

4. Audio recordings of high fidelity for use by groups and by individuals of a given age and maturity level. The recorded materials should be an integral part of the materials package.

5. Suitable socio-cultural content in prose and poetry, music, and various arts, as well as the physical features of the country or countries, the institutions, and the patterns of living.

D. Suitable Equipment

The satisfactory use of the media under consideration requires that the equipment

1. be simple to operate, trouble free, and durable

2. provide a clear, well defined picture, in color when feasible

3. provide high fidelity sound

4. be placed to permit excellent viewing and hearing by a group of students. At the same time class size should be limited to a number who can see and hear well, can participate effectively, and can be encouraged and assisted by the teacher.

E. Testing and Evaluation

The evaluation of pupil progress consists of value judgments on data obtained from measuring achievement in terms of the instructional objectives of a given course or sequence of courses and in terms of the particular curriculum which the pupils have experienced. Criterion tests will then be used periodically to determine achievement in such aspects of oral language learning as listening comprehension, pronunciation, intonation, fluency, oral pattern variation, and free response; in such written language skills as reading comprehension, reading rate, dictation, written pattern variation, guided and free composition; in knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the foreign culture.

Overall proficiency in the various skills acquired over a relatively long period of time may also be measured by standardized proficiency tests especially for the purpose of placement. Again, the student should be tested in all the skills he has been taught.

Since teaching-learning situations can frequently be converted into testing situations, these media, namely television, videotape, and films, have possibilities and limitations in testing exploited possibilities in aptitude testing.

II. Possibilities and Limitations

In considering the strengths and weaknesses of television, videotapes, and films in foreign language instruction, it is here assumed, even idealistically if necessary, that the materials used are of the highest linguistic and cultural quality and exemplify the pedagogical assumptions stated above. It is also assumed that the equipment and viewing and acoustical conditions provide high fidelity pictures and sound. In short, granted first-rate materials,

equipment and conditions, the possibilities and limitations of the media, and only the media, are here considered.

A. Possibilities

Scheduled educational television, videotapes, and films, separately and unaided by a teacher, can:

1. provide authentic, native models of oral language, as well as written language. Dialogues, model sentences, commentaries, narration, directions, and questions can be presented by a variety of native speakers.

2. present oral language in authentic cultural situations so that language is perceived as one aspect of a total way of life (including values, attitudes, customs).

3. provide opportunities for associating language with persons, objects and actions in situations.

4. offer the same language material in a variety of situations.

5. offer different language material for one situation.

6. provide frequent, regular practice opportunities in listening comprehension, oral imitation, repetition, variation through pattern practice, and free response; also reading and writing.

7. provide oral or written language which serves as confirmation or correction of a student response when the student recognizes it as such.

8. provide a common core or framework for a foreign language curriculum.

9. provide linguistic and cultural situations which may complement or supplement the on-going local curriculum.

10. present material for the testing of listening comprehension, perception, and/or recognition of cultural content such as physical features of a country, customs, values, attitudes.

B. Limitations

1. Scheduled educational television, videotapes, or films, separately and unaided by a teacher, cannot:

   a. correct the student who does not at the moment make sufficient auditory discrimination and/or produce an acceptable oral response (unless auxiliary scoring equipment is used for certain kinds of responses)

   b. correct the student who does not at the moment make sufficient visual discrimination and/or produce an acceptable written response (unless auxiliary scoring equipment is used for certain responses)

   c. provide for individual or group differences in aptitude, in native speech habits, etc.

   d. exploit the interests and motivations of individual students or particular groups

   e. provide a live, social teacher-pupil relationship which makes possible personal encouragement and reward, and individual diagnosis and treatment.

2. Scheduled educational television cannot:

   a. be interrupted to meet the immediate needs of learners

   b. provide for individual rates of learning

c. provide the proper amount of practice for individuals who need varying amounts of practice

d. adjust to unforeseen or special changes of schedule in local schools due to inclement weather, assemblies, testing programs, power failures, etc.

III. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion of these media, in the light of the stated assumptions regarding foreign language learning and teaching, materials, equipment, and conditions, leads to the following conclusions:

The limitations of the media reveal the need for the complementary services of a foreign language specialist teachers.

The most competent foreign language teacher can be significantly more effective with these tools than without them, since the media can provide for areas of learning otherwise totally inaccessible to class and teacher.

It is obvious, therefore, that the foreign language curriculum and instruction can be improved if schools take advantage of the positive possibilities of television, videotapes, and films listed in Section II A, provided that personnel, materials, and equipment are supplied to offset the limitations identified in Section II B.

The effective utilization of these media, furthermore, is dependent on intelligent curriculum planning development guided by a competent local foreign language supervisor or coordinator.

(Prepared by a Sub-committee of the Massachusetts Foreign Language Advisory Committee and approved by the entire committee.)

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